United Nations A/HRC/32/G/3

General Assembly

Distr.: General
13 June 2016

Original: English

Human Rights Council
Thirty-second session
Agenda item 4
Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Note verbale dated 17 May 2016 from the Permanent Mission of Armenia to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Armenia to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva presents its compliments to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and has the honour to provide herewith the statements of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic, made on 2, 26 and 30 April and 12 May 2016, regarding the military aggression by Azerbaijan and its violation of the 1994-1995 ceasefire agreements (see annex).

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Armenia kindly requests the Office of the High Commissioner to circulate the present note verbale and the annex thereto* as a document of the thirty-second session of the Human Rights Council under agenda item 4.

* Circulated as received, in the language of submission only.

GE.16-09644(E)
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Annex

Statements by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic

2 April 2016

In the early hours of April 2, Azerbaijan initiated an unprecedented escalation of tension along the entire line of contact between the armed forces of Azerbaijan and Nagorno Karabakh Republic, using heavy military equipment, artillery and combat aircraft. Azerbaijani armed forces fired artillery shells not only at the advanced positions of the NKR Defense Army, but also populated areas, which resulted in casualties, including among the civilian population.

Such an escalation of tension by Azerbaijan is fraught with unpredictable consequences. In the current situation, the NKR Defense Army is taking all necessary measures to force Azerbaijan to cease hostilities. Azerbaijan, which once again has undertaken an irresponsible and senseless adventure, bears full responsibility for any possible consequences.

We urge the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs and the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office to strongly and publicly condemn Azerbaijan for the systematic escalation of the situation, the undermining of peace and stability in the region.

26 April 2016

Following the large-scale aggression on 2-5 April this year against the Nagorno Karabakh Republic (NKR), Azerbaijani authorities continue their efforts to finally derail the peace process and transfer it to a military dimension. Azerbaijani attempts at the UN and the OSCE to unilaterally denounce the trilateral cease-fire agreement of 12 May 1994 come to prove this. At the same time, Azerbaijan resorts to its traditional practice of fraud and manipulation, trying to put the blame on the Armenian sides and thereby avoid responsibility for unleashing the war.

In this regard, we consider it necessary to remind that the cease-fire agreement concluded between the NKR, Azerbaijan and Armenia for an indefinite term is the only real achievement in the Azerbaijani-Karabakh conflict settlement process. It is thanks to this agreement that foundations for peace talks were laid and conditions were created for the activities of the mediators to find a just and final solution to the conflict.

We share the view of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-chairs that this agreement, as well as the agreement of February 1995, is the basis for the cease-fire and its strengthening. We also consider as extremely important the consolidation of positions of the international community and the mediator-countries in taking effective and urgent measures to force Azerbaijan to comply with the commitments taken under those agreements.

NKR MFA strongly condemns any attempts by the Azerbaijani authorities to reconsider those agreements, assessing them as an explicit intention of Azerbaijan to unleash another war, and considers it necessary to fully restore the cease-fire established in May 1994.

To guarantee the security of the NKR and its people, as well as to promote peace and stability in the region, NKR authorities will take diplomatic and other possible measures to ensure the full implementation of the agreements of 12 May 1994 and 6 February 1995, and to exclude the possibility of developments along the criminal scenario planned by the Azerbaijani authorities.

30 April 2016

On April 30, 1991, 25 years ago, the operation "Ring" began with a massive shelling of Getashen and Martunashen, which became a prelude to the subsequent full-scale military aggression of Azerbaijan against the Nagorno Karabakh Republic. During the operation, the Armenian villages were at first surrounded by the interior forces of the USSR Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Soviet Army. And afterwards, the Azerbaijani OMON and militia entered those villages under the pretext of "passport checks", but in fact for murder, robbery, terror against the Armenian population, followed by deportation.

The operation "Ring" became the continuation of a series of Armenian pogroms and ethnic cleansing in Sumgait, Baku, Kirovabad and other settlements of Azerbaijan, as well as in the villages of Northern Artsakh in 1988-1991, which were intended to strangle at its birth the national liberation struggle of the Armenians of Artsakh and deprive them of their homeland. The Azerbaijani authorities did not conceal that they considered the operation "Ring" as the beginning of a large-scale deportation of all Armenians from Nagorno Karabakh.

As a result of the operation, during which tanks, combat helicopters and artillery were used, more than two dozen villages of Northern Artsakh and Shahumyan, Hadrut and Shushi regions were completely devastated and destroyed. Almost 10 thousand people were deported, more than 100 killed and several hundred taken hostage. The fate of many of them still remains unknown.

25 years later, on the night of April 2, 2016, the Azerbaijani authorities unleashed yet another aggression against the NKR, which as in 1991, was accompanied by numerous violations of international humanitarian law and war crimes committed against the civilians and soldiers of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic, including targeted shelling of peaceful settlements, killings of civilians, as well as the mutilation and ill-treatment of the dead bodies.

However, both in 1991, and now all the attempts of the Azerbaijani authorities to intimidate and break the people of Artsakh, to suppress their strive for freedom and, eventually, to deprive them of their homeland, resulted in a complete failure.

Azerbaijan's criminal behavior only strengthens the determination of the people of Artsakh to build and develop their independent and free state as the guarantor of its security and peaceful existence. Acknowledgment by the international community of this fact, and, as a result of it, the international recognition of the NKR will put an end to the ongoing attempts of Azerbaijan to destroy Artsakh and eliminate its people, and ensure peace and security in the region.

12 May 2016

Twenty-two years ago, on May 12, 1994, a termless agreement on ceasefire and cessation of hostilities, signed by the Nagorno Karabakh Republic, the Azerbaijani Republic and the Republic of Armenia through the mediation of the Russian Federation, entered into force. This agreement, as well as the February 6, 1995 trilateral agreement on

strengthening the ceasefire, signed under the auspices of the OSCE, still remain the only real achievement, which laid the foundation for peace talks and created conditions for the activities of the mediators on finding a just and final solution to the Azerbaijani-Karabakh conflict.

Before April 2, 2016, the ceasefire was generally maintained, despite the incessant attempts of Azerbaijan to destabilize the situation on the Line of Contact between the armed forces of the NKR and Azerbaijan. The NKR authorities have repeatedly drawn the attention of the international community to the purposeful actions of the Azerbaijani side, as a result of which ceasefire violations were becoming more and more threatening in their nature and scale.

Official Stepanakert has been urging the international community to condemn the deliberate policy of Azerbaijan of escalating tensions and derailing the negotiation process conducted under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairmanship. We have repeatedly pointed out that without an adequate and targeted international response, the consistent and purposeful actions of Azerbaijan on fomenting a war in the region will become irreversible.

In the early hours of April 2, Azerbaijan, in gross violation of the agreements of May 12, 1994 and February 6, 1995, launched a large-scale offensive along the entire Line of Contact between the armed forces of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic and Azerbaijan, using heavy weaponry, artillery and combat aircraft. Only thanks to the decisive actions of the NKR Defense Army, which gave a fitting rebuff to the insolent rival, on April 5, Azerbaijan was forced to ask, as in 1994, through the mediation of the Russian Federation for the cessation of the hostilities. It has been generally maintained, despite the recurrent violations by the Azerbaijani side.

Even after the failure of the military venture of April 2-5, Azerbaijan has not abandoned the idea to solve the conflict by force, as evidenced by the statements of the Azerbaijani officials, including at the highest level. Moreover, Azerbaijan tries to unilaterally denounce the ceasefire agreement of May 12, 1994, which is an obvious continuation of the policy on disrupting the process of peaceful settlement of the conflict and instigating a war in the region.

The Nagorno Karabakh Republic, being committed to an exclusively peaceful settlement of the conflict and making every effort to fully restore the ceasefire, is at the same time prepared to stop, in the strongest terms, any attempts of Azerbaijan to unleash another aggression.

Ensuring full compliance with May 12, 1994 agreement and the practical implementation of the February 6, 1995 agreement, which contains a set of measures on early warning and crisis stabilization is the only way of creating the necessary conditions for the resumption of the peaceful settlement process of the Azerbaijani-Karabakh conflict.